

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8829

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CU/PC PASS TO SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, SCUL, HA

SUBJECT: SISTER CITIES ACTIVITIES: VISIT OF DR. HENRY MILLER

REF: STATE 234207

1. AFTER DR. MILLER RETURNED TO PORT-AU-PRINCE FOLLOWING ALBERT SCHWEITZER HOSPITAL BOARD MEETING IN DESCHAPELLES, I HOSTED AN INFORMAL COCKTAIL PARTY NOV. 5 TO INTRODUCE HIM TO CITY FATHERS AND OTHER LEADING CITIZENS WHO COULD FORM THE NUCLEUS OF A LOCAL SISTER CITY ORGANIZING COMMITTEE, INCLUDING PREFET GEORGES GIGARO, MAYOR ANTOINE HERARD AND THE TWO OTHER P-AU-P COMMUNAL COMMISSIONERS, THE TWO DEPUTIES WHO REPRESENT CITY IN NATIONAL LEGISLATURE, THE RECTOR AND DEAN OF AGRONOMY OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY, DIRECTOR HUBERT DE RONCERAY OF CHISS (WHO HAD VISITED BATON ROUGE), THREE LEADING BUSINESSMEN WHO HEAD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, ROTARY CLUB AND INFLUENTIAL BELLEVUE CLUB, AND LUCIEN MONTAS, BOARD CHAIRMAN OF HAITIAN-AMERICAN INSTITUTE (BINATIONAL CENTER) AND DIRECTOR OF LEADING DAILY NEWSPAPER LE NOUVELLISTE.

2. ALL PARTICIPANTS EMPHASIZED THE EXPLORATORY NATURE OF THE MEETING, AND DR. MILLER SPECIFICALLY DISAVOWED ANY OFFICIAL BACKING FROM BATON ROUGE OFFICIALS EXCEPT FOR DIRECTOR OF BATON ROUGE CONVENTION AND VISITORS COMMISSION, WHO, MILLER ADDED, APPARENTLY AT LEAST HAD VETTED THE MATTER WITH THE MAYOR. MOREOVER, MAYOR HERARD, AN OLD FRIEND OF DR. MILLER WHO PERSONALLY VOUCHED FOR DR. MILLER AS GOOD FRIEND OF HAITI, POINTED OUT THAT PORT-AU-PRINCE WOULD CONSIDER TWINNING WITH A NUMBER OF LIKELY US CITIES,

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INCLUDING ATLANTA AND SAVANNAH, GEORGIA. DESPITE THIS HESITANT AND

TENTATIVE NOTE ON WHICH THE SUBSEQUENTLY LIVELY Q AND A DISCUSSION BEGAN, A CONSENSUS FORMED TO THE EFFECT THAT IF BATON ROUGE'S MAYOR WERE TO WRITE TO MAYOR HERARD EXPRESSING HIS CITY'S INTEREST IN JOINTLY CONSIDERING A POSSIBLE TWINNING BETWEEN THEIR TWO CITIES, MAYOR HERARD AND PRESUMABLY MOST IF NOT ALL OF THOSE HAITIANS ATTENDING THE MEETING WOULD BE HAPPY TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON BEHALF OF PORT-AU-PRINCE. IF BATON ROUGE DOES WRITE MAYOR HERARD, THE HAITIANS OBVIOUSLY INTEND TO EXAMINE THE PROPOSED MATCH SOBERLY, AND WILL POSE SOME SEARCHING QUESTIONS ON RACE RELATIONS IN BATON ROUGE AND HOW WELL HAITIANS WOULD BE RECEIVED (FORTUNATELY DE RONCERAY

TOLD THE GROUP THAT HE HAD BEEN WARMLY RECEIVED THERE DURING HIS PRIVATE VISIT). I EMPHASIZE THAT WHILE THE EMBASSY, DEPARTMENT AND SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL (SCI) ALL SOUGHT TO HELP FACILITATE TWINNING PROGRAMS BETWEEN HAITIAN AND US CITIES, THE REAL INITIATIVE AND FOLLOW-THROUGH DEPENDED UPON THE CITIES THEMSELVES.

3. DESPITE OUR SUGGESTION THAT PUBLICITY SHOULD BE AVOIDED UNTIL FIRM ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE, LE NOUVELLISTE PROMINENTLY PUBLISHED A REPORT ON THE MEETING NOV. 6. IT NOTED THAT THE PARTICIPANTS HAD ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE THE IDEA OF TWINNING WITH INTEREST, AND THAT THEY HAD AGREED TO TAKE FURTHER STEPS ONCE THE MAYOR OF BATON ROUGE CONTACTS MAYOR HERARD. SEVERAL RADIO NEWSCASTS THEREAFTER REPORTED THE STORY. I THINK THIS PUBLICITY, ALTHOUGH NOT EXPECTED, WILL DO NO HARM AND WILL SERVE TO GENERATE INTEREST IN THE IDEA, IF NOT NECESSARILY IN HAVING BATON ROUGE AS THE PREFERRED PARTNER.

4. COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED - DESPITE THE HESITANT NATURE OF DR. MILLER'S OWN REMARKS, THE IDEA OF TWINNING PORT-AU-PRINCE WITH AN APPROPRIATE AMERICAN CITY HAS BEEN WELL LAUNCHED, AND AN AUTHORITATIVE GROUP OF CIVIC LEADERS HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN THE CONCEPT. THEY CLEARLY HOPE A TWINNING MIGHT INVOLVE MATERIAL BENEFITS FOR THEIR CITY, BUT THEY ALSO REALIZE THAT THE BENEFITS WOULD HAVE TO BE RECIPROCAL IN VARIOUS WAYS. THUS I RECOMMEND THAT THE SUBSTANCE OF PARAS 1 THROUGH 3 BE PASSED TO APPROPRIATE BATON ROUGE OFFICIALS, AND THAT SCI CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO CONTACT OTHER LIKELY US CITIES. HAITI JUST ESTABLISHED A TOURIST OFFICE IN ATLANTA (PAUP A-171, ITEM 11), AND MAYOR JACKSON REPORTEDLY TOLD HAITIAN OFFICIALS THAT HE PLANNED TO VISIT PORT-AU-PRINCE

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EARLY NEXT YEAR. ALTHOUGH ATLANTA IS ALREADY TWINNED WITH MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA AND RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, I SUGGEST THAT PORT-AU-PRINCE BE CONSIDERED A LEADING TWINNING CANDIDATE AS THE FRENCH-SPEAKING LINK TO ATLANTA, THE CITY WHICH IS FORGING CLOSE TIES TO AS MANY OAS MEMBER NATIONS AS POSSIBLE. LASTLY, SAVANNAH OF COURSE MUST STILL BE CONSIDERED A LIKELIHOOD IN VIEW OF THE HISTORICAL RELEVANCE HAITI HAS FOR THAT CITY'S BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS.

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